



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904
Tel # (240) 777-8414

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Summary of ECCAB Board Virtual Meeting

ATTENDANCE

ECCAB Members Present:

Rachael Evans	Raju Chebium
Bill Bentley	Roberta Goldberg
Sebastian Smoot	Dawn Hill
Chris Bolton	Len Newman
Larry Edmonds	Susan Price
Ken Flemmer	Kimberly Price-Evans
Fisseha Adugna	Lucille Smith
Samantha Blizzard	

Guests Present:

Gwen Wright, Donnell Zeigler, Khalid Afzal, Molline Jackson, Brian Anleu, Molline Jackson, Rachel Newhouse, Vikki Garcia, Julio Murillo, David Lorenzo-	Botello, Jacob Goudy, Dan Wilhelm, Nicole Drew, John Kinsley, Lillian Lai, Margarethe, Eileen Finnegan, Ed Weiler, Fatmata Barrie, Jake Adler, Mark Pharaoh
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Staff Present: Jewru, Linda Cooper

MEETING INITIATION

Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Summaries: The meeting summaries for May 5th, June 2nd, September 1st and November 3rd were approved.

PRESENTATION BY SPECIAL GUESTS

Topic 1: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan Update

Presenters: Gwen Wright, Director of Montgomery Planning Department and Khalid Afzal, Special Projects Manager gave an overview of the “Thrive Montgomery 2050” General Plan, which has been approved by the Planning Board and is currently being reviewed by Montgomery County Council.

A copy of the presentation was provided as an attachment to these summaries. The notes below represent a brief summary of the presentation and responses to questions raised during the presentation.

- The general plan is not prescriptive, but rather sets a vision, guidelines, and identifies the demographic, market, cultural, and technological changes over the past few decades since the last general plan.
- The old plan is outdated: did not consider equity, changes in technology, housing affordability, climate change, etc.
- Key changes for East County: the old plan limited growth and investment in East County. The new plan reintroduces East County as a growth corridor so that local government and private sector can invest more along the US 29 corridor, especially in areas that have been neglected: Burtonsville, Cloverly, Colesville, Fairland, White Oak, Hillandale. Also, a new focus is improved east-west connections so that residents of East County can access jobs and amenities in the rest of Montgomery County.
- Cost of housing is rising faster than inflation and faster than wage growth. This is making it increasingly more difficult for young people and non-rich people
- Question from Rachael Evans: the housing costs of zip codes shown in the slides are in Bethesda and Silver Spring. Have you looked at home price trends in East County? Gwen Wright: yes, all over the entire county, prices are increasing rapidly.
- Question from Sebastian Smoot: is there a reason that Fairland was not called out with a dot on the Thrive growth corridors/activity center map? Gwen Wright: the map is not all inclusive
- Question from Len Newman: housing affordability is a regional issue that extends beyond Montgomery County. Gwen Wright: yes, neighboring jurisdictions are in the process of studying ways to alleviate housing affordability. Building more housing might not solve all the issue, but what is the alternative? Doing nothing will exacerbate the problem.
- Question from Bill Bentley: the board is supportive of Thrive and attainable housing. What can
- Question from Rachael Evans: why is it called Thrive 2050? Gwen Wright: unlike other jurisdictions that revise their general plans every 5 years, Montgomery County historically has updated theirs every 30 years. This plan is intended to serve as a guideline for the next three decades.

Topic: Fairland/Briggs Chaney Master Plan Rewrite/Update

Presenter: Molline Jackson, Fairland/Briggs Chaney Master Plan Co-Lead

- Why is plan being updated? The previous master plan is 24 years old, and the area has changed a lot since then. The old plan did not address racial equity and social justice. The new BRT system provides opportunities for more amenities, retail, and housing.
- The Master plan has 4 phases: listening, visioning, refining, sharing
- Current phase is listening, which is gathering feedback from the community. Efforts include:

Commented [1]: Linda: please include PDF of slides as an attachment to this meeting summary.

- Speaker series: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/upcounty/fairland/fairland-master-plan-1997/fairland-briggs-chaney-mp/community-conversations-in-fairland/>
- Door-knocking (thousands of doors knocked)
- Pedestrian audit: https://youtu.be/hv_3wlty_ic
- Email newsletter sign up: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/FT8tN84/fairland>
- Questionnaire: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fairland-briggs-chaney>
- Question from Bill Bentley: how does the master plan relate to Thrive? Gwen Wright: the general plan is a blueprint of ideas, and the Fairland/BC master plan will be informed by Thrive.
- Question from Margarethe who feels like Fairland/BC is a food desert, especially for households without a car. Also, feels like we don't have enough parks that aren't playgrounds within walking distance. Rachel Newhouse: we hear you, and we've heard this comment from other residents. We are going to explore ideas for improving these conditions. Gwen Wright: The White Oak Town Center will provide a new grocery store.
- Question from Sebastian Smoot: the SWOT slide states "most commuters drive alone". He was curious if your team has any data. MCDOT recently claimed that one out of seven of US 29 rush hour commuters are carpoolers, and I am skeptical it's actually that high. Donnell Zeigler: the next phase of the Master Plan will focus on Existing Conditions and we will further study commuter trips and types of commuters within the Master Plan area this Spring.
- Rachael Evans was concerned that the master plan will take a long time. Don: the master plan process is identifying short-term improvements, such as trimming back vegetation along Briggs Chaney Road (identified during the walk audit)
- Roberta Goldberg asks why is development happening faster in other parts of the county? Gwen Wright: for a long time, there was a development moratorium in East County. This resulted in a lack of investment, which grew into a perception that it was a less desirable area.
- Gwen Wright adds that the term "East County" is problematic because it doesn't highlight the individual communities in the area, and the special amenities in each one, such as parks, restaurants.

REPORTS/UPDATES

David Lorenzo-Botello: Glass's office recently asked Metro Bus Z6 and Ride On 10 to adjust the bus routes so they stop at Adventist Hospital. Also, Councilmember Glass recently published an op-ed in support of making Ride On permanently free. Rachael Evans suggests that free fares should not come at the expense of service. Samantha asks how the free fares will be paid for.

- Julio Murillo: Councilmember Hucker is sponsoring legislation to allocate 10% of the county energy tax to a "green energy bank" to support property owners that want to make green energy improvements. Hucker convened an economic development panel with small businesses to have a conversation about the health of the economy and ideas for making it more resilient. Tomorrow the Council will hold a Climate Town Hall.

- Jewru Bandeh: Two new board members were appointed to the ECCAB. White Oak Master Plan Manager Position application is closed, and interviews will start soon. White Oak Town Center Signage Hearing occurred recently, and hopefully the project will continue to progress. Yesterday, the County Council held a public hearing on ZTA 21- 9- Biotech Priority Campus Zone eligibility. Weekly food distribution sites continue to provide food to needy families. MCDOT will hold a virtual town hall to discuss Phase 2 of the Route 29 BRT on December 16.
 - Question from Fisseha Adunga: what is the status of the Sears in White Oak? Jewru responds that conversations continue but the property manager has not shared much information. He visits the property several times a week to ensure that it is being maintained. Follow-up question from Fisseha: the shopping center is dark and doesn't feel safe. Jewru: the shopping center has two property managers: BF Saul is responsible for the White Oak Shopping Center lots, and Sears is responsible for its parking lot. Jewru says he will investigate what can be done.
 - Question from Lucille Smith: what is the status of the Giant at Orchard Center, where Shop Rite existed? Are they beginning to open the new grocery store? A few days ago, there were a lot of trucks and cars. Eileen Finnegan noted that they recently obtained a building permit.
 - Fisseha Adunga raised concerns about traffic and road safety along Old Columbia Pike. Jewru offered to follow up with Fisseha taking the lead after the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Redistricting: At the November ECCAB meeting, the board motioned to draft a letter to the county council in support of the Redistricting Commission's recommendation to create an East County district. The draft letter was presented to all attendees. The board members discussed minor proposed revisions to the letter. A MOTION was made to approve the letter with the proposed revisions and submit to the county council. MOTION PASSED.
- Budget letter: the ECCAB has not submitted letters with our recommendations for the upcoming operating or capital budgets. The topic was tabled for discussion at the joint committee meeting on December 8.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m. The motion was seconded and approved without objections.